USDA Radical Chronicle
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Spring 2005

The RSC Corner

by Ron Korcak, Chair, RSC

Since this is the first "RSC Corner" for the RadChronicle, let me begin by providing a brief background on the RSC and its purpose. Officially, the Radiation Safety Committee provides Departmental oversight of the Radiation Safety Staff for the Assistant Secretary for Administration. The Committee is composed of representatives from each of the seven USDA agencies that use radiation sources and/or materials. John Jensen, Director of the Radiation Safety Staff, and Glenn Haggstrom from the Department also serve as Committee members. Additionally, there are technical representatives for Biotechnology Research, Animal Research, and Human Studies, as well as a representative for Location Radiation Protection Officers (LRPO).

The RSC meets quarterly, and I will write an "RSC Corner" for each of the four annual editions of the RadChronicle. My goal is to succinctly provide you a sense of what the RSC is dealing with and current 'hot issues.'

Perhaps the most important current issue is the security of our irradiators and radioactive materials. There have been three incidents involving security within the last four years. These incidents were reported to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) under whose authority we (USDA) have our license. No penalties have resulted from these incidents; however, I want to stress that security is a big issue, and we all need to be cognizant of how we store what we have. When on-site inspections are made by the RSS or RSC representatives, they do consider security in their reports. If you at any time have a question about the security of YOUR materials, please call RSS immediately.

We received an update on the status of the Radiation Safety Management System (RSMS) from Katina Jones at the February RSC meeting. The current plan is that the RSC members will be granted access to the new system by the May quarterly meeting. The goal is to debug and beta test the system as much as possible before releasing to the user community. This has been a long process, but the RSC feels that it will be a major step in making your interaction with RSS as smooth and easy as possible.

The RSS is also working to establish on-line radiation safety training. The future plan is to reduce the current week-long LRPO training (usually held at Texas A&M University) to a couple of days and to provide supplementary training on-line. This on-line training would also be available for other users to take. We will keep you updated as things evolve.

If you have any comments or questions or would like to see an issue or concern covered in the RadChronicle, please feel free to e-mail me at KorcakR@ba.ars.usda.gov.

On-Line Training Coming Soon

Radiation Safety Training will be On-line in May 2005

We are about to unveil the USDA On-Line Radiation Safety Training program. It was developed specifically for USDA employees who work with radioactive materials and x-ray producing equipment. This training will help ensure that USDA employees safely use radioactive materials and comply with USDA radiation safety program requirements. Taking the on-line courses is the first step in becoming an authorized user of radioactive materials in the USDA radiation safety program. The course curricula are specific for each type of permit (such as, for a portable nuclear gauge), The courses meet Nuclear Regulatory Commission radiation safety training requirements. For users of unsealed radioactive material in laboratories, additional on-site training from your Location Radiation Protection Officer is also required.

We are making the courses available to you as they are developed. The first course will be the Basic Radiation Safety course which is a comprehensive course for most users and will take 4-5 hours to complete. You can take the course at your own pace and start and stop as often as you like. You will be tested on each section and need a cumulative grade of 70% to become an authorized user. You must register

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with RSS to access the on-line courses. Please check our web site (www.rss.usda.gov) frequently, we hope to have the training site up and running by May 1, 2005.

Let us know if you have any questions about the on-line training courses or the USDA Radiation Safety program or if you have ideas to help us improve the training. Good luck and we hope you enjoy the training. Thank you for working safely with radioactive materials and x-ray producing equipment.

USDA Radiation Safety Committee Meeting

Quarterly Meeting in Brief

The USDA Radiation Safety Committee held a quarterly meeting attended by representatives of the Agricultural Marketing Service, Agricultural Research Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Food Safety Inspection Service, Forest Service, the Grain, Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Office of Procurement and Property Management. The Committee:

- Developed actions to respond to the security violations cited in the recent Nuclear Regulatory Commission report
- Developed a plan to respond to recommendations in report of the Committee's internal audit of the radiation safety program
- Outlined issues affecting the upcoming renewal of USDA's license issued by NRC for use of radioactive material
- Reviewed clean-up activities at former radioactive waste burial sites at USDA facilities
- Determined priorities and reviewed the time line for development of on-line radiation safety training and records management

The Radiation Safety Staff works with the member agencies to ensure the safe use of radioactive materials and compliance with the departmental radiation safety program.

NRC Reports on USDA Radiation Safety Program

Security Violations Identified

We recently sent to each USDA radiation source permit holder and Location Radiation Protection Officer (LRPO) the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) report on their inspection of the USDA radiation safety program. NRC inspectors visited 28 USDA locations over a 3 year period as well as the Radiation Safety Staff (RSS) office in Beltsville, Maryland. The report describes the NRC inspection findings and USDA radiation safety program operations. The report's executive summary indicates that the USDA radiation safety program "continues to function effectively." Thank you for effectively managing your radiation safety programs.

Also enclosed with the report is a notice of violation that describes violations of NRC security requirements at 3 USDA locations. Fortunately, none of these incidents resulted in loss of material or radiation exposures. Security of radioactive materials is a fundamental requirement for any radiation safety program. Loss or theft of radioactive materials could easily result in unnecessary radiation exposure to employees and the public. You must ensure that all of your radioactive materials are under the direct control of authorized individuals when in use and properly locked and secured when in storage. Please review your radioactive material security procedures and make improvements where needed. Contact RSS if you have any questions about security requirements.

Please share this report with individuals who use radioactive material at your location and let us know if you have any questions. We appreciate your effort in ensuring the safe use of radioactive materials and compliance with program requirements.

NRC Notice to Employees Form-3 Updated

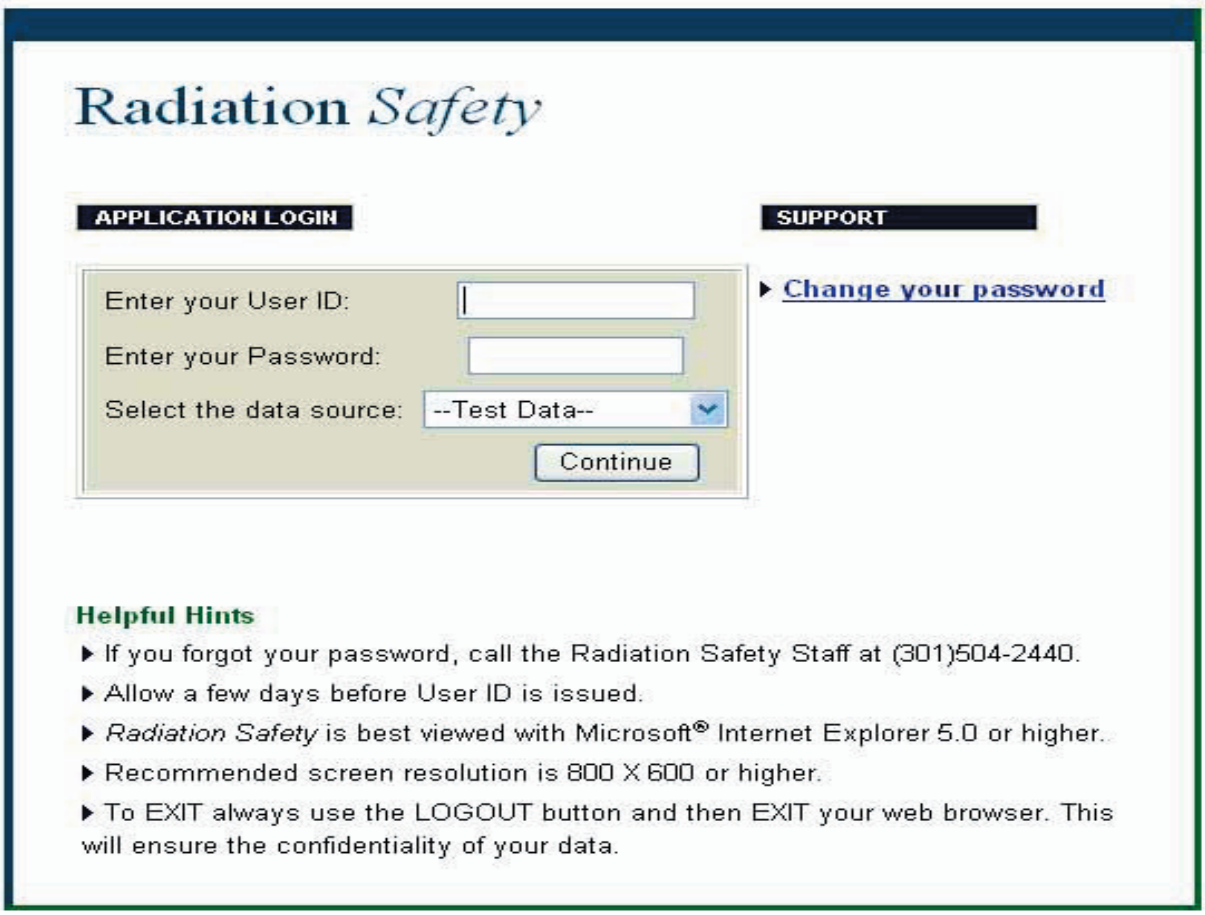
The NRC has reissued the NRC Notice to Employees (Form-3). The Notice to Employees form must be displayed where licensed materials are used. All Permit Holders and LRPOs should replace their existing NRC Form-3 with the current one.

The new form can be found at the NRC's website, http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/forms/. Form-3 is the first form on the page. This is a pdf document. Form-3 is also available in Spanish.

RSMS Update

The data conversion portion of the RSMS project was successfully performed. This data is now being loaded into the production server. Because the amount of data that is being transferred is quite extensive, and to ensure the accuracy of the transferred data, we will be manually verifying all data fields during the next few weeks.

As we continue to work toward bringing the database on-line we must ask for your assistance. Please ensure that all of your RSS-83 forms for unsealed inventory have been submitted to RSS. Unsealed inventory data is the largest component of the new system and our records must be current and accurate. You should have already received your unsealed inventory audit by now. It is very important that you respond quickly. We do not want to transfer bad data records into the new system. If you have any questions or concerns, contact Katina Jones. We thank you in advance for your assistance with this task.



View of the RSMS Log-In Screen

NRC Increases Portable Gauge Security Requirements

New Rules Effective July 11, 2005

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission amended its regulations for portable gauges containing radioactive material to use two independent physical controls to secure the gauges against theft. NRC will require two independent physical controls for these gauges when they are not under your control and constant surveillance. An example of acceptable storage in a building includes securing the gauge in a locked storage container (closet or cabinet) within a locked room (regardless of the level of security applied to the building, such as manned, guard stations, card readers, phone-in access). Examples of acceptable storage in unattended vehicles include placing the gauge inside a locked van and securing it to the vehicle with a steel cable and lock; placing the gauge in a pickup truck bed inside a locked, non-removable box and further securing the box with a steel cable and lock; or keeping the gauge inside the locked cab of the pickup truck and securing the gauge to the vehicle with a steel cable and lock.

Although theft of portable gauges from USDA is rare (it has happened once in the past 13 years), the NRC reports that 50 gauges are stolen nation-wide each year and only half are recovered. The NRC believes these new requirements will make it more difficult to steal gauges and reduce the risk of accidental exposures or intentional misuse of the radioactive material. The RSS will send specific information to all portable gauge users with instructions on how best to comply with these new requirements. Please contact RSS if you have any questions.

Record Retention Guidelines

We have recently received several requests for RSS record retention requirements. This information can be found in Section 6 of your Handbook. The last paragraph in each subsection shows the retention guidelines. The chart shown below can be used as a quick reference. For more detailed information please consult your Handbook.

Record Type	Retention Period (Years)
Purchase or Transfer of Radioisotopes	3
Disposal of Radioisotopes	Indefinite
Radioactive Waste Manifests	Indefinite
Instrument Calibration	3
Leak Test Results	3
Laboratory Survey Results	3
Purchase or Transfer of Electron Microscopes	3
Contamination Survey Results	3
Purchase, Transfer, Disposal of an Irradiator, Gauge, ECD	For the life of the Permit
Personal Radiation Exposure	Indefinite
Thyroid Bioassay Worksheet	3
Radioactive Iodine Effluent Monitoring Worksheet	3
Instrument Efficiency Worksheet for I-129 Standards	3
Thyroid Bioassay Instrument Efficiency Worksheet	3
Surveys and Performance Evaluations of X-ray Diffraction Systems	3

How to Contact RSS:

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